STATE COUNCIL OF CIVIL DEFENSE
MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

May 4, 1956

INFORMATION CIRCULAR NO. 71

PUBLIC RELEASE DATE: TUESDAY, MAY 22, 1956

CHANGE IN PUBLIC WARNING SIGNALS

PART I - INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

1. The State Council of Civil Defense, both at the January 10, 1956 meeting of County Civil Defense Directors held in Harrisburg and at sectional meetings of County and Local Directors subsequently held in Warren, Greensburg, Allentown, Lewistown and Williamsport, offered for consideration a proposal that the public warning signals presently sounded by Pennsylvania civil defense organizations be changed to conform to those signals prescribed in Federal Civil Defense Administration Advisory Bulletin No. 182, dated March 4, 1955.

2. The purpose of the proposed change in public warning signals is both to establish uniformity of procedure as followed in the various States and to provide for increased flexibility in use of the signals, particularly as related to possible dangers from radioactive fallout.

3. Practically all Pennsylvania civil defense officials who have commented on, or expressed preference concerning, the signal changes mentioned in Paragraphs 1 and 2, immediately above, favor the proposal. The proposed change will, therefore, be effected as provided in Parts II and III, below.

PART II - DATE AND NATURE OF CHANGE

4. On and after Friday, June 1, 1956, the only two (2) types, or kinds, of attack warning, or "public action", signals to be publicly sounded in Pennsylvania shall be:

A. THE "ALERT" SIGNAL, a steady, non-fluctuating blast on sirens, horns or whistles, lasting from three (3) to five (5) minutes in all; and

B. THE "TAKE COVER" SIGNAL, a wailing, or "warbling", siren tone, a series of short blasts on horns or whistles, or a combination of the two, lasting a total of three (3) minutes.

(SPECIAL NOTE: Some civil defense organizations are now known to possess public warning devices incapable of sounding signals of three (3), or more, minutes' duration without danger of "burning out". In order to provide the maximum possible degree of public safety, it is recommended that all such equipment be replaced, under the matching fund program as local funds become available, with units fitted with "continuous duty" motors, as described in Information Circular No. 20, dated March 3, 1952. In the meanwhile, it is suggested that the exact signal "time lengths" herein prescribed be temporarily disregarded and that present devices be used to sound warning signals of the maximum possible duration consistent with equipment capabilities. This suggestion is based on the fact that the nature -- that is, steady or warbling -- of a signal is far more important than its length.)

The "Alert", or "Attention", signal is a new warning, or "public action", signal not previously used. The "Take Cover" signal is exactly the same as that now called the "Red", or "Duck and Cover", signal and so is actually a change only in name.

5. Since a majority of the public warning systems now installed in Pennsylvania communities are manually operated, most civil defense organizations will have to make few, if any, mechanical changes in their systems, in order to permit public sounding of the signals prescribed in Paragraph 4, immediately above. In those cases where changes are required, however, the responsible individuals will be expected to effect completion and test of those changes not later than Thursday, May 31, 1956.

6. The present "White", or "All Clear", signal, consisting of three (3) steady blasts separated by two (2) periods of silence will be abolished Thursday midnight, May 31, and shall not be publicly sounded on sirens, horns or whistles on or after Friday, June 1, 1956.

PART III - PURPOSE AND USE OF NEW SIGNALS

7. The primary purpose of the "Alert" signal described in Subparagraph 4 A, above, is rapidly to gain the attention of both civil defense workers and the public at large, in order to facilitate the dissemination of essential emergency information or instructions to them.

8. THE "ALERT" SIGNAL SHALL BE PUBLICLY SOUNDED ON SIRENS, HORNS OR WHISTLES WHENEVER THE LOCAL CIVIL DEFENSE DIRECTOR DEEMS IT ESSENTIAL TO DISSEMINATE EMERGENCY INFORMATION OR INSTRUCTIONS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO CIVIL DEFENSE FORCES OR TO THE PUBLIC AT LARGE. (Upon public sounding of the signal, all civil defense workers and the public at large will be expected to "listen for" essential emergency information or instructions. Shortly after sounding of the signal, the information or instructions will be disseminated by radio broadcast, by public address systems, or by any and all other local means previously prescribed.)

9. The purpose of the "Take Cover" signal described in Subparagraph 4 B, above, is rapidly to notify the public at large of the fact that attack by hostile aircraft is imminent, and that previously prescribed self-protection measures should be immediately initiated.

10. THE "TAKE COVER" SIGNAL SHALL BE PUBLICLY SOUNDED ON SIRENS, HORNS OR WHISTLES IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT OF ANY AND ALL "RED" WARNINGS TRANSMITTED VIA THE BELL-AND-LIGHTS SYSTEM OR OTHER PRESCRIBED CIRCUITS. IN ADDITION, THE "TAKE COVER" SIGNAL MAY BE SOUNDED WITHIN GIVEN AREAS UPON RECEIPT OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION TO THE EFFECT THAT SERIOUS DANGER FROM FALLOUT EXISTS, OR SHORTLY IS EXPECTED TO EXIST, WITHIN THOSE AREAS. (Upon public sounding of the signal, most civil defense workers and the public at large will be expected immediately to take cover in the best available shelter, but certain civil defense workers and limited numbers of other individuals in key positions may be expected to carry out specific emergency duties previously assigned them.)

PART IV - RELATED INFORMATION

11. The U. S. Air Force, based on circumstances faced at various times will continue to declare three (3) principal "Conditions of Warning" with assigned meanings previously prescribed, namely:

A. "Condition Yellow" - Attack by hostile aircraft probable

B. "Condition Red" - Attack by hostile aircraft imminent

C. "Condition White" - Attack by hostile aircraft improbable

The above mentioned "Conditions of Warning" will continue to be transmitted to Pennsylvania Keypoint Warning Centers by direct wire line. From the Keypoints, they also will continue to be "fanned out" over the bell-and-lights instantaneous air raid warning system and by "chain" telephone calls, in the manner previously prescribed.

(SPECIAL NOTE: Simultaneous with the signal change herein prescribed, the State Council of Civil Defense had also proposed a change in the use of the bell-and-lights system, designed to provide for transmission of summary information concerning length of warning time. Unfortunately, still unresolved technical problems make this change presently impossible. It will, however, be effected at the earliest possible date, with due advance notice to all concerned.)

12. The "Alert" signal prescribed in Sub-paragraph 4 A, above, may be publicly sounded as deemed essential during conditions "Yellow", "Red" and "White", including times both before and after public sounding of the "Take Cover" signal. A number of typical examples of times of and reasons for the public sounding of the "Alert" signal are listed below for illustrative purposes.

A. Possible soundings during "Condition Yellow":

(i) Sounding shortly following receipt of "Warning Yellow". - To order all civil defense auxiliary policemen to report to assigned duty stations.

(ii) Sounding upon receipt of specific information concerning estimate of advance warning time. - To order initiation of partial tactical evacuation in accordance with previously prescribed plans.

(iii) Sounding upon receipt of information concerning details of attack on another city. - To order evacuation of certain areas because of possible danger from radioactive fallout.

B. Possible soundings during "Condition Red":

(i) Sounding a short time after attack. - To warn all people within a given area to "move out" because of spreading fires.

(ii) Sounding several hours after attack. - To instruct rescue, firefighting and medical teams to return to shelter because of danger of radioactive fallout.

C. Possible soundings during "Condition White":

(i) Sounding immediately following receipt of "Warning White". - To inform civil defense workers and the public at large of the declaration of "Condition White".

(ii) Sounding several hours after receipt of "Warning White". - To inform civil defense workers and the public at large of the absence of danger from residual, or lingering, radiation.

(iii) Sounding several days after receipt of "Warning White". - To warn civil defense workers and the public at large of bacteriological contamination of public water supply system.

13. While the "Alert" signal conceivably might be sounded on numerous occasions, it is highly important that the number of actual soundings be kept to an absolute minimum. The reason for this is that too frequent sounding will seriously reduce both the impact and effectiveness of the signal.

14. Where necessary or desirable, Local Civil Defense Directors may prescribe specific actions which shall be "automatically" taken by certain individuals upon public sounding of the "Alert" signal. Particular care must, however, be exercised in the development of all such plans, because of the widely varied circumstances under which the signal may be sounded. Broadly speaking, the "Alert" signal usually will mean, both to civil defense workers and to members of the public at large, simply to "listen for information or instructions".

15. The "Take Cover" signal prescribed in Sub-paragraph 4 B, above will always be publicly sounded during "Condition Red" and, more specifically, immediately following receipt of the "Red" warning. In addition, Local Directors may publicly sound the "Take Cover" signal during conditions "Yellow" and "White" in the event of receipt of official information to the effect that serious danger from fallout exists, or shortly is expected to exist, within the area (see Paragraph 9, above).

16. In addition to wartime use in the manner described in Paragraph 12, above, the "Alert" signal also may be used in connection with natural disaster operations, as locally desired. In the case of an impending flood, for example, it might be desirable publicly to sound the "Alert" signal and then to broadcast information to the effect that all individuals residing in certain sections of a given city should be prepared to evacuate their homes after daylight but prior to noon of the next day. Similarly, it might be desirable to sound the signal and then send out a call for bulldozer operators to report to a given point for urgent emergency duty. Unlike the "Alert", the "Take Cover" signal will be used only in connection with wartime emergencies.

17. Effective use of the new "Alert" signal requires both extensive

and highly flexible plans for the local dissemination of emergency information and instructions. All such plans should provide for the wisest possible use of local broadcasting facilities, public address systems and all other means for rapid dissemination of information, including special message and display systems (e.g. display of colored signal flags or lights in prominent places).

18. Since special radio broadcasts represent one of the quickest and most effective means of disseminating emergency information and instructions, County and Local Civil Defense Directors should constantly bear in mind the following facts:

A. Emergency information and instructions may be broadcast <u>either</u> on standard <u>or</u> on "Conelrad" (640 and 1240 kc) frequencies, according to federal regulations currently in effect; and

B. Because of widespread coverage and possible resultant confusion, all civil defense emergency radio broadcasts must be specifically addressed to the individuals for whom they are intended. Properly "addressed" messages might be, for example, "<u>All Johnson Township auxiliary policemen</u> are ordered to report to assigned duty stations", or "<u>Residents of Jefferson County</u> are advised to remain 'under cover' at least until noon today, May 4, 1956".

19. County and Local Directors may continue, as locally desired, to use special radio broadcasts locally to "fan out" essential information concerning conditions "Yellow", "Red" and "White". For example, it might be found desirable to broadcast the following, with or without prior sounding of the "Alert" signal: "County Civil Defense Director Smith has just announced that, regardless of reports to the contrary, 'Condition Yellow' still remains in effect throughout Johnson County". Similarly, with or without sounding of the "Alert" signal, the County Director might wish to broadcast the following: "'Condition Red' still remains in effect

throughout Alexander County and all residents are directed to 'remain under cover:". (Generally speaking, the "Alert" signal should be publicly sounded only in connection with dissemination of essential emergency information and instructions deemed to be of paramount importance. Even though directly associated with existing emergencies, most "flash" radio messages should be broadcast without prior sounding of the "Alert" signal.)

20. All County Civil Defense Directors are being furnished, for distribution within their respective counties, bulk supplies of the Federal Civil Defense Administration's so-called "Alert Card". These are $8\frac{1}{4}$ by 11 inch, buff-colored cards with red lettering and insignia. Each card contains one (1) "kitchen-size" instruction card 9 by $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, together with three (3) "pocket-size" instruction cards approximately $3\frac{1}{4}$ by 2 inches.

21. Those County Directors desiring added supplies of "Alert Cards" should make written request for them through their respective Area Directors. The State Council of Civil Defense will then attempt to secure the requested cards from the Federal Civil Defense Administration free of charge, but no guarantee of delivery can now be made.

22. Beginning Tuesday, May 22, 1956, County and Local Civil Defense Directors are urged to join with the State Council of Civil Defense in a widespread publicity program relating to the warning signal change herein prescribed. In this program, full use should be made of all local news sources, including press, radio and television. In making local releases, it is recommended that particular stress be laid on the fact that there are but two (2) public warning signals, namely, the "Alert" and "Take Cover" signals. The steady, non-fluctuating "Alert" signal means "listen for emergency information or instructions", while the wailing, or "warbling", "Take Cover" signal means "take cover immediately".

23. Any and all provisions of previously released Information Circulars which are in any way contrary to the provisions of this circular are hereby rescinded.

Richard Gerstell
Director of Civil Defense